

**UCLA DEPARTMENT OF FILM, TELEVISION & DIGITAL MEDIA
PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS**

Example Syllabus—*The syllabi posted are general syllabi for students and alumni who wish to find out the topics generally covered in these courses*

INSTRUCTOR:

UCLA FILM AND TV SUMMER INSTITUTE

**FTV 133B, INTERMEDIATE TV WRITING DRAMA/DRAMEDY SERIES
SUMMER 2025**

TIME:

LOCATION:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The goal of this class is for you to write an original one-hour original drama/dramedy or half-hour dramedy pilot.

COURSE GOALS:

Students will learn how to:

- Service the franchise of your original series
- Fit into the network, cable, or streaming “wheelhouse” and meet their expectations
- Develop and deepen your characters
- Create a Beat Sheet and Outline for your pilot
- Write the First Draft of a pilot for your original series
- Develop a Pitch for your original series

You’ll also be expected to provide notes on your fellow writers’ material. This includes: verbal/written notes, participation in table discussions, and active contribution to the work of others. Please post assignments in PDF format, on the class Bruin Learn site.

RECOMMENDED (NOT REQUIRED) READING:

Writing the TV Drama Series, by Pamela Douglas

The TV Showrunner’s Roadmap, by Neil Landau

TV Writing On Demand: Creating Great Content in the Digital Era, by Neil Landau

Plus, read every successful pilot you can, especially in the genre, style, and tone that relate to your script.

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK ONE (Class Meetings 1&2): Introduction to the course and syllabus. Student pitches and feedback. Review of: one-hour drama and half-hour dramedy structure; A, B, and C storylines; premise, theme, conflict; character development; the difference between writing screenplays and episodic TV; episodic pilot vs. "premise pilot" vs. hybrid; servicing the "franchise" and story arcs; breaking story; beat sheet and outline formats; effective pitches and loglines.

Assignment #1: Refine chosen pitch and come up with two potential A and B stories. Due for next class.

Assignment #2: Orally pitch two possible A and B stories for your pilot. Discussion of Beat Sheets and how to write a Teaser. Write a Beat Sheet for your pilot. Due for next class.

***SATURDAY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: SCRIPT COVERAGE**

WEEK TWO (Class Meetings 3&4): Discussion and feedback on Beat Sheets. Discussion about writing an Outline based on Beat Sheets. Unifying theme, character arcs, network "story area documents," and compelling act breaks. Character development.

Assignment #3: Write first half of outline (5 pages), due for next class. Discussion about outlines in progress.

Assignment #4: Revise first half and write second half of Outline (5 more pages). Completed Outline due for next class.

WEEK THREE (Class Meetings 5&6): Discussion and feedback on Outlines. Discussion about how to segue from Outline to First Draft. Scene structure. Writing memorable scenes. Discussion about series bibles. The studio and network notes process.

Assignment #5: Begin writing first draft of your script. Goal is complete rough draft of the Teaser, due for next class.

Assignment #6: Continue writing script. Goal is to complete Teaser and Act One. Due for next class.

WEEK FOUR (Class Meetings 7&8): Read selected pages in class and discuss. Discussion of issues that have emerged from Outline to script. Writing great dialogue.

Assignment #7: Continue writing script. Turn in pages for table read in next class.

Assignment #8: Continue writing scripts. Goal for this week is to complete Acts Two and Three, due for next class.

***SATURDAY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP: HOW TO PITCH**

WEEK FIVE (Class Meetings 9&10): Read selected pages in class and discuss. Discussion on establishing the world of your show, tone, and voice.

Assignment #9: Acts 4 and 5 (depending on format). For half-hours, please revise all acts. Discussion about rewriting strategies, editing, and polishing. Solving story issues.

Assignment #10: Complete and revise first draft of script. Develop a pitch.

WEEK SIX (Class #11): **First draft of all teleplays due in PDF format, to be posted on the class Bruin Learn site.** Discussion about what happens in the real world with the draft to be "published" and distributed to the director, actors, assistant directors, and all department heads for pre-production. The pre-production, production, and post-production processes: the production board and call sheet. Breaking into the industry. Practice pitches.

Assignment #11: Refine your pitch for Pitch Session.

***INTERMEDIATE CLASS PITCH SESSION**

Class #12: Individual Script Conferences. Receive notes on your completed draft in a one-on-one script consult. You will also have the opportunity to discuss feedback from the Pitch Session.

***CLOSING CEREMONY AND RECEPTION**

STATEMENT OF GRADING:

This class has a strict policy of zero unexcused absences, which includes being absent for any reason other than documented illness or emergency. One or two excused absences are acceptable with documentation from a doctor or other health care professional, or due to a documented personal emergency. One or two excused absences will not impact your final grade, provided all assignments are successfully completed and turned in on a mutually agreed upon due date, approved by the instructor. One unexcused absence will result in a drop in your grade. Two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade in the course.

Showing up late to class is disruptive and will impact your final grade. Habitual lateness - late to more than 2 class sessions, without prior approval from the instructor, will result in lowering the final grade by at least half a letter grade.

Assignments must be turned in on time. Please carefully spell-check and proofread your work. Late delivery of an assignment will also impact grading, unless it's with prior approval by the instructor.

Below is the weight given to each component of the final grade: Please note that **ALL COURSE GRADES ARE FINAL.**

Participation	20%
Series Pitch	5%
A/B Stories	5%
Teaser	5%
Acts 1 & 2	10%
Acts 3,4,5	15%
Beat sheet	10%
Outline	10%
First Draft	20%
Total:	100%

Final Course Grade: 100%

- A (90-100%)
- B (80-89%)
- C (70-79%)
- D (60-69%)
- F (< 59%)

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION:

If you're going to be late/absent, please send instructor an email. No eating during class. No use of electronic devices, unless it's for class purposes. Please follow all required UCLA COVID safety protocols. The class may not be recorded.

All ideas discussed in class are strictly confidential and should not be discussed with others outside of class.

We do not endorse or allow the use of any AI-generated material in our workshops. The discovery of any AI-generated material in student scripts will result in an automatic course failure.

Industry professionals are partially defined by their interactions with other Industry professionals. As such, you will be graded on your interactions in class. That means that class attendance is mandatory, as is class participation. Your feedback is invaluable to your colleagues. Therefore, you are expected to listen and contribute during class discussions.

UCLA statement of Academic Integrity:

With its status as a world-class research institution, it is critical that the University uphold the highest standards of integrity both inside and outside the classroom. As a student and member of the UCLA community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors. Accordingly, when accusations of academic dishonesty occur, The Office of the Dean of Students is charged with investigating and adjudicating suspected violations. Academic dishonesty, includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions or facilitating academic misconduct. Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is the presentation of another author's words or ideas as if they were your own. If you have any questions about documentation, quotations, and related matters, please do not hesitate to ask your instructor before submitting your work.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

The diversity of the people of California has been the source of innovative ideas and creative accomplishments throughout the state's history into the present. Diversity - a defining feature of California's past, present, and future - refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion,

language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and geographic region, and more.

Because the core mission of the University of California is to serve the interests of the State of California, it must seek to achieve diversity among its student bodies and among its employees. The State of California has a compelling interest in making sure that people from all backgrounds perceive that access to the University is possible for talented students, staff, and faculty from all groups. The knowledge that the University of California is open to qualified students from all groups, and thus serves all parts of the community equitably, helps sustain the social fabric of the State.

Diversity should also be integral to the University's achievement of excellence. Diversity can enhance the ability of the University to accomplish its academic mission. Diversity aims to broaden and deepen both the educational experience and the scholarly environment, as students and faculty learn to interact effectively with each other, preparing them to participate in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society. Ideas, and practices based on those ideas, can be made richer by the process of being born and nurtured in a diverse community. The pluralistic university can model a process of proposing and testing ideas through respectful, civil communication. Educational excellence that truly incorporates diversity thus can promote mutual respect and make possible the full, effective use of the talents and abilities of all to foster innovation and train future leadership.

Therefore, the University of California renews its commitment to the full realization of its historic promise to recognize and nurture merit, talent, and achievement by supporting diversity and equal opportunity in its education, services, and administration, as well as research and creative activity. The University particularly acknowledges the acute need to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented.

Accessible Education:

In compliance with federal and state laws and University policy, UCLA is committed to ensuring that students with disabilities have full access to all aspects of the university experience that are available to all students. Academic accommodations are designed to provide that access. The Center for Accessible Education (CAE) has been designated as the campus entity that

determines a student's eligibility for accommodations and services on the basis of disability.

If you are already registered with the Center for Accessible Education (CAE), please request your Letter of Accommodation in the Student Portal. If you are seeking registration with the CAE, please submit your request for accommodations via the CAE website. Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks to review the request. For more information, please visit the CAE website, visit the CAE at A255 Murphy Hall, or contact us by phone at (310) 825-1501.

Student Resources:

- * Counseling and Psychological Services
Wooden Center West: (310) 825-0768
www.caps.ucla.edu

- * Ashe Student Health & Wellness Center
Ashe Center Main Line: 310-825-4073
Ashe COVID Hotline: 310-206-6217
COVID case reporting: exposuremanagementteam@ashe.ucla.edu

- * Letters & Science Counseling Service
A316 Murphy Hall: (310) 825-1965
www.college.ucla.edu

- *Academics in the Commons at Covell Commons: (310) 825-9315 free workshops on a wide variety of issues relating to academic & personal success
www.orl.ucla.edu (click on "academics")

- * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Resource Center
Student Activities Center, B36: (310) 206-3628
www.lgbt.ucla.edu

- * UCLA Center for Accessible Education
A255 Murphy Hall: (310) 825-1501, TDD (310) 206-6083
<https://www.cae.ucla.edu/>

- * Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars
106 Bradley Hall: (310) 825-1681
www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu

- * Student Legal Services
A239 Murphy Hall: (310) 825-9894
www.studentlegal.ucla.edu

- * Dean of Students Office
1206 Murphy Hall: (310) 825-3871
www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu